

THE RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION, SHREWSBURY GROUP

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 26th November 2020

Zoom Video Conference

Minutes of Meeting

1. Welcoming remarks:

- The chair welcomed those in attendance in these difficult circumstances
- Welcome to Anne Suffolk, Acting Chair of Shropshire Area Ramblers
- The chair ran through the Agenda and the special arrangements for the evening

Present: 20 members (see attached attendance list)

Apologies for absence: Peter Greeve

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 22nd November 2019

It was proposed that the minutes of the previous AGM be accepted as a true record of the proceedings.

Proposed: Di Higgs, seconded Kath Bristow

Agreed unanimously.

3. Matters arising: Attention was drawn to the fact that Kath Bristow had been speechless on learning of her Volunteer Commendation Award.

4. Officers' Reports

Since the reports had been available online since November 15th, the meeting concentrated on those of the Chair and the Treasurer, with members having been offered the opportunity to table questions.

Highlights of Chair's Report:

The suspension and/or restrictions on walking activities resulted in an ad hoc walks programme. This was essential as a survey of those involved indicated that there were insufficient leaders for anything approaching our normal extensive programme. It also resulted in the adoption of a walk booking system in order to meet lock-down regulations, meet track and trace requirements and allow walk leaders some discretion as to numbers they felt comfortable with. The number of leaders has been relatively small and those involved have had increased administration of recording bookings. From 12th July to 4th November 34 walks were scheduled, covering Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays and 11 are scheduled so far for the period from 3rd December. The Record of the Shrewsbury Group in this respect has been outstanding. Walks have been well publicised using electronic media, thanks to Phil, Amanda and Di.

We have a new Thursday walks co-ordinator who is Tessa Conway-Holland. This means that this excellent walks programme, pioneered over the last 5 years by Kath will be maintained.

The Shrewsbury Group committee meetings have migrated to Zoom very successfully and we continue our drive to encourage all members to use electronic media. Despite challenges, Di managed to produce an October Newsletter.

The constrained walks programme has not impacted on membership which is holding up well.

Publicity: the Facebook page has been effective at promoting our ad hoc walks. The number of followers has risen from 436 last year to the current 607.

Sales of the Twenty Walks book boomed during lock-down with a reprint of 1000 required to meet demand. Amanda managed to contract new suppliers at previous cost levels. All walks were re-checked to up-date. Any changes are listed on the website and the book references this web page. Amanda has also forged links with Area Publicity (Sarah Riley) with a view to sharing publicity expertise throughout the Shropshire Area.

John Newnham's Memorial walk in January was well supported and reported by the Star and Chronicle.

Shropshire Way: The Association became a Charitable Trust in January 2020 and registered for Gift Aid later in the year. The second Shropshire Way Festival of Walks took place between 19th – 25th September. £5000 was raised in donations, including £1000 from the Shrewsbury Group which more than covered the cost of the new Sculpture marking the beginning and end point of the Shropshire Way at Kingsland Bridge. The objective for the future is to establish a steady revenue stream to maintain Shropshire's long-distance path. The Trust has a shop accessed through the website or Facebook page. A2 posters of the whole Shropshire Way can be purchased.

Lost Ways and Footpaths: The work of the P3 Group has been severely impacted by the pandemic. Only 5 days of work for 3 people have taken place. Heavy use of many paths during the lock-down has resulted in pressure on paths, stiles etc. The footpath secretary logged 19 areas of concern between May and late September. Walk 13 in the Twenty Walks book has been a particular concern. Building works have caused a 6-month closure near Oteley Road. Our investigations, in response to complaints, have shown that the Council has the right to make this closure without re-routing. There was a feeling that communication of the closure could have been better. The planning Application for the Northwest Relief Road has been delayed.

Social activities: These came to a virtual stop because of the lock-down. The group's visit to Sedbergh went ahead very successfully for a slightly reduced number of participants. Huge thanks to Mick for organising and coping with the changing regulations.

The group still has not found a Social Secretary.

Report of Group Treasurer

The Treasurer thanked the following for their oversight of accounts:

Peter Greeve – Self-Funded Account

Audrey Menhinick – Special Projects Account

Rob Lea – P3 Account

He also thanked Tom Gutman for once again auditing the Rambler Shrewsbury Group's Accounts.

Thanks went to Amanda Hartley Newton for selling so many Twenty Walks books and for her work in delivering them.

The treasurer drew attention to a number of points in the accounts:

In the main accounts there is an entry of £650 from Ramblers Worldwide Holidays. This is the highest for any group nationally for this particular year. Mick thanked all those who had been on holiday.

£500 was donated to the Shropshire Way for the new sculpture.

The P3 group received a Council grant of £1200. Sadly, they have only been able to spend a very small part of this.

The self-funded account has £977 taken forward from trips cancelled this year to be used next year. An item here for £38 is mainly for paying in cheques – 30p per cheque. This will reduce as more members use electronic banking.

Overall, for most items the income and outgoings are the same.

There is a £1378 surplus for the year, largely because trips did not happen.

Steve Bristow applauded the impressive reduction in admin costs, largely through the use of electronic methods of payments and transfers.

The book account: 573 books were sold. Reprinting was charged at the same rate as two years ago. At the end of September, the stock stood at 916 books. Profit amounted to approximately £400, helping to make a second donation of £500 towards the Shropshire Way.

To sum up, we have spent much less this year. The accounts are in a healthy condition going forward.

Proposed that the accounts presented represented a true and accurate representation of the Group's financial situation.

Proposed: Kath Bristow

Seconded: Sue Turner

Accepted unanimously.

5. Election of Officers and Committee

The current committee is as follows:

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|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| • Chairman | Neville Hubbard |
| • Deputy Chair | Audrey Menhinick |
| • Secretary | Sue Turner |
| • Treasurer | Mick Gadd |
| • Footpaths | Neil Mosely |
| • Webmaster | Neville Hubbard |
| • Publicity | Amanda Hartley- Newton |
| • Programme Secretary | Di Higgs |
| • Membership Secretary | Rebecca Barker |
| • Self-Funded Account Secretary | Peter Greeve |
| • Group Rep at Area | Phil Barnes |

All members of the committee were willing to continue in their current roles.

The membership agreed to this unanimously.

A new title was proposed for the role which Kath Bristow has been fulfilling on the committee. This title is Committee Support Officer.

Proposed that the title be adopted:

Proposed: Sue Turner Seconded: Di Higgs

This proposal was adopted unanimously.

6. Thanks/Tributes

The Chair thanked Audrey for the work of the Shropshire Way Association/Trust, in particular the new sculpture. He shared a wonderful photo of Audrey and the Sculpture. Thanks also went to Kath for her endeavours in establishing and co-ordinating the Thursday walks programme which has turned out to be a growth area and well established for the future.

Thanks also went to the members of the committee for their continuing work with particular mention of Amanda for the group's excellent publicity and for organising the Christmas meal at Wistanstow, to Di for producing a newsletter despite the problems imposed by the lock-down and to Phil and Nev for managing the technology around communications and meeting arrangements.

There were also thanks to those who had led walks.

7. AOB

No items for AOB had been intimated. Members were given an additional opportunity to ask questions. There were none.

Members did give thanks to Nev for keeping a walks programme going. A mass 'walk-about' was suggested to celebrate the eventual end of the lock-down.

The meeting ended at 8.20pm.

Signed.....

Date.....

Neville Hubbard, Chair, Ramblers Shrewsbury Group

Area address – Anne Suffolk

See attached notes.

Additional points:

Anne particularly thanked the P3 workers for their recent efforts.

The Don't Lose your Way campaign is the major issue for Ramblers going forward. Shropshire is among the top ten counties in terms of number of lost ways. There are 1596 of them. There is a need for Rights of Way champions.

Questions:

Is there any sign of the process for re-establishing lost ways to be simplified? Can we use the methods of the British Horse Society? This depends upon the local authority. Shropshire is more willing to accept historical evidence than, for example, Telford and Wrekin.

At a time when landowners are lobbying hard to restrict access as are farmers and the Country Landowners Association, is it not more likely that a push at the national level will be more effective? An independent public enquiry would provide national notice. However, the standard approach is to record evidence. Local authorities have control of the definitive map. All authorities are subject to the same law but demand different standards of evidence.

A list of priority paths is being produced at Area level, for linking paths and circular routes, but it would help if members kept an eye on local papers to know what is going on locally and let Area know so that our side of the argument can be made. The situation is further complicated by the fact that EU subsidies for this purpose will disappear and we have no way of knowing whether they will be replaced. A huge amount of enthusiasm will be needed to address the situation.

The Chair thanked Anne for her report.